# FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

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Since 1949 the purpose of Fellowship In Prayer is to promote the practice of prayer among all religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice, and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

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Our cover photo is a detail from a 12th century South Indian Bronze statue of Siva, "Lord of the Cosmic Dance". The gestures of the hands symbolize release and freedom from fear.

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"For a world united in prayer"

# Words of Wisdom

Day by day, hour by hour and minute by minute we live and move and have our being in God. When we turn our lives completely over into His loving care it is amazing the miracles that happen. Sometimes we are not fully aware of the tremendous force which is at work beneath the every day appearances of the experiences which we undergo. There is much we might question but when we simply let go of all surface appearance and trust completely in the love and wisdom of the Father then we can know that the ultimate outcome will be the best for all concerned.

*Zelma Dennis*

The first necessity is that we should have the courage to face life, and to encounter all that is most perilous in the world. When this is possible, meditation itself becomes the means by which we accept and welcome the demons which arise from the unconscious – a process very different from the practice of concentration on some object as a protection against such forces. Only if we venture repeatedly through zones of annihilation can our contact with Divine Being, which is beyond annihilation, become firm and stable. The more a man learns whole-heartedly to confront the world that threatens him with isolation, the more are the depths of the Ground of Being revealed and the possibilities of new life and Becoming opened.

*Kartfried Graf von Durckhein,* The Way of Transformation

We are not called upon to create the world. It has already been done.

*Martin Buber*

## Guest Editorial

What exactly does our Fellowship stand for anyway? Are we just a small-sized group, trying to care for our own spiritual needs, occasionally adding a few members here and there? Was this the intention of our founders? Of our benefactors? If not, how are we going to grow?

We are in some sense evangelical, evocative, and ecumenical. We are evangelical in the sense of trying to spread the good word. We are evocative in the sense of attempting to communicate what we believe without limiting ourselves to any particular doctrine. We are ecumenical in the sense that not only are own members to be found in all forms of Christianity, but also in the Jewish, Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, and other faiths. We are in this sense similar in some ways to the Unitarians, though not quite like the Society for Ethical Culture. These characteristics do not add up to an identity that is uniquely our own.

We are neither a religion nor a church, nor a denomination. Our founders did not organize the Fellowship, nor did our benefactors intend it just to minister to the spiritual needs of our small membership. They did not intend us to simply find ways whenever we could, to help the unchurched, or to give a few charitable grants, or to publish a small periodical for our members to read and pass around. They wanted more for the Fellowship than that. All these things are done by many, many other worthy groups.

Our Fellowship does have its own unique identity. Our identity is the word *prayer.* It is up to us to say that, and to spell it out, loud and clear.

What do we have that the multitude of religious organizations in this nation don't? Something indeed that the various religions of the world do not quite do?

It may be that *the study, the practice, and above all the sharing of the prayer experience* among all mankind is to be our particular contribution to this precarious world at this very critical time. We want to know the infinite variety of linkages through prayer between human beings and God. We want to find out: Why is it so? How is it so? What are the experiences of others in prayer from the greatest authorities, to the most humble seekers? Why is prayer sometimes ineffectual? What are some of the limitless forms of alternate practice?

Even if we put all our members together, we can never presume to know or provide final answers. *But the Fellowship can be a catalyst, a clearing house, a communion center.* We will gather as much information about the praying experience as we can. Through our publications, we can share the experience with many people, and their numbers can grow. Through our publication and our social contacts, we can urge everyone interested to do the same among all religious groups of any description, among all denominations and churches, and among all men and women of good faith.

*James T. C. Liu*

*Dr. Liu is a trustee of Fellowship In Prayer and chairman of the Department of East Asian Studies of Princeton University.*

# News of the Fellowship

Fellowship Readers have been sent the first in a series of supplimentary mailings; a special edition edition of *Primary Point* the quarterly publication of the Kwan Um Zen School in Cumberland RI. We hope that this information on an Ecumenical Conference, sponsored last spring by our friends at Kwan Um, on "Prayer and Meditation in the Nuclear Age" will help bring readers up to date on the kind of cooperation that is going on between believers, seekers, and especially among Contemplatives. We think readers will be surprised and pleased to discover the scope and the warmth of these bonds. Readers are encouraged to inform us about similar events or ongoing projects of cooperation between members of the different faiths in their local areas, and to mention the fellowship's interest and support to the people involved.

A program of visits by the Executive Secretary this winter to areas where we have concentrations of readers is being planned. Plans are to locate a meeting place and to inform readers in the area by mail several weeks in advance of the date. Meetings will provide an opportunity for Fellowship readers to get to know one another personally, to worship together for a few moments, and to exchange information on our questions and interests. The Fellowship's Executive Secretary, Edward Miller will be happy to arrange visits or informal talks with other groups, churches, etc. upon request. Please contact the office with your ideas, or to request further information.

In the Princeton area, it is likely that a series of informal programs will occur throughout the fall and winter. Friends of the Fellowship will be invited to meet informally with representatives of different religious traditions who are visiting in the North East. As our visitors are frequently limited in the time they have available, meetings will be announced by special mailings. Readers outside the immediate Princeton area should notify the office if they wish to receive these announcements.

Fuard Uduman, of the Serendip Sufi Studies Circle and the Perfect Peace Lodge of Sri Lanka (Ceylon) is currently visiting the United States. Fuard, and the groups with which he works in Sri Lanka, have been in correspondence with the Fellowship for many years. Fuard is a businessman, a noted poet, a wonderful story teller, and a student of Sufi Sheik Bawa Muhaiyeddeen. As we go to press, arrangements are being finalized for him to meet with other Fellowship readers on a Saturday afternoon during the end of September.

Future visitors are expected to include representatives from the Christian and Buddhist Monastic traditions, and others. Contact us to receive notice.

The course in spiritual Autobiography will be meeting on Saturday, October 20 at the Fellowship office at 10 AM. Some openings are still available. Anyone wishing to join this study group by mail should write to Dr. Tony Manousos in care of this office.

## News of the Fellowship, continued from page 5

The Surrender Group sponsored by the Fellowship In Prayer meets weekly at the Princeton Friends Meeting (School Building) on Thursday nights between 8 and 10 pm. All are welcome. Transportation and information are available by calling the Fellowship office (609) 896-3636 during business hours.

The Surrender Group is intended to be open to persons from a broad range of backgrounds, and is primarily concerned with practical ways through which we may learn "to surrender ourselves as the center of our lives and to accept Truth as the center, and thus to discover a way of life that brings meaning , affection, joy, and some measure of inward peace".

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### BREATHE IN LOVE

(. . .perfect love casts out fear. I john 4:18b)

Not only for Adam in creation–
All are made in God's image of spirit.
Breathed into me is the breath for living,
and I can come back to that sure knowing
with any breath I take, perceiving:
    Breathe in love, breathe out fear.
    Breathe in love, breathe out fear.
I can become a channel for loving,
I can begin to act in my prayer:
    Breathe in love for another. . .another. . . .
    Breathe out fear, oh, breathe out fear.

*Emily Sargent Councilman*

# The Sun Shines on Everybody

A member of one of the local church congregations lost her husband recently. It was a mixed marriage – the man was a Reform Jew. Shortly before the husband died, he asked that his body be cremated.

In order to comply with her husband's final request the widow searched for a rabbi to conduct the funeral service at a crematorium. The couple were relative newcomers to the area, and during the husband's prolonged terminal illness, he had neither the strength nor the opportunity to join a local synagogue.

The only rabbi available was Orthodox, and he was unwilling to officiate at the funeral. "Cremation is expressly forbidden to the Orthodox Jew," he explained to her apologetically. "If you would agree to switch to an ordinary burial, then I would make all the necessary arrangements for you."

The woman thanked him, but politely refused. She was quite insistent upon following her husband's last instructions. Time was of the essence as well. Unlike many other religions, a Jewish funeral must take place as quickly as possible.

The unhappy widow, with no friends or family at hand, turned in desperation to her new minister for advice. Perhaps he had met a Reform rabbi at one of the regional Interfaith Conferences?

Unfortunately the answer was negative, "I don't know of a Reform rabbi anywhere nearby," he admitted. "Why not let me conduct the service?"

"Oh no, I'd never expect you to do that." The widow was surprised at his unusual offer. "It would be a terrible imposition, and besides, wouldn't you be violating some church doctrine?"

The minister smiled and replied in a gentle tone of voice, "Despite the fact that you late husband was Jewish and you are Christian, you both worshipped the same God. I can't deny that the prayers and rituals are different – yet it is the identical Lord to whom the both of you directed your adoration and faith."

"If that's true, Reverend," the woman said, "then why didn't the Rabbi stretch a point and overlook Orthodox Law since my husband was a Reform Jew. The very same reasoning would have applied."

"The circumstances are not the same. The Rabbi would have actually *broken* a law of Orthodoxy. I am positive that he would have volunteered his services had you decided on a normal interment. The differences are as extreme between Reform Judaic and Orthodox Judaic doctrines, as the differences between our church doctrines and those of Orthodox Judaism."

"He did offer to officiate if I would compromise on an ordinary burial. Actually it would have been a compromise for him as well, since my husband never followed the principles of Orthodoxy. I regret that I misunderstood his attitude."

The widow gratefully accepted the minister's proposal to conduct the last rites for her husband. Out of deference to the Jewish mourners, the minister was attired in a dark suit rather than his usual religious vestments.

His touching eulogy was well-received by both the Christians and the Jews who had come to pay their last respects. The simple, but universal prayers that the minister recited could not have offended anybody.

The lesson to be learned from the foregoing is best expressed in MALACHI 2;10:

"Have we not all one father"
hath not one God created us?"

*Di Inge*

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What is Silence?

Silence is all and where Silence Is there Wisdom rules.

Silence – the atmosphere of God – is the sanctuary of the seeker. It is the refuge in which the oneness of God is experienced and the mingling of man and his Creator is realised. It is in this state that the spirit of God throbs with its infinite tune of Love and sends its rhythmic currents of spiritualism into the minds of its devoted seekers. It is the tablet on which one should sit mediation in surrendering one's thoughts to God. It is the hour of God. The garment of His beloved disciples. The power that holds the creation with its embrace of magnetic currents and the force that directs the seeker to the realms of here and the hereafter. The magic wand which unites the two lovers with the bliss that dips into Eternity. The channel through which man seeks himself, finds himself, and loses his self in the love of his Creator. The mantle of peace and devotion, the emblem of spiritual might and power, and the crown of the spiritual kingdom. The state in which God manifests Himself to His people and the wisdom which rules over all creation. The magical spell of silence, the soothing caress of its stillness and the magnetic power of its spirit makes it indespensable to those who seek their Creator in themselves.

To know thy silent Master
Delve in thy silent realms
His Beauty lies in its stillness
His Love, thy love, overwhelms.

*Fuard Uduman, Seeker on the Path*

# Distractions in Prayer

I should like to share with you some of my experiences in contemplative prayer and some of the solutions I have found helpful. My own introduction to contemplative prayer began many years ago and flowed naturally from the discursive method. As my relationship of love with the Lord grew, I gradually found myself becoming quieter and more centered, no longer able to pray through thoughts and imagination. Love had drawn me to a quiet place of rest and here the Word could now take on flesh, my flesh. In this quiet place I continued my daily practice of placing myself in the Lord's presence for fifteen to twenty minutes, twice a day.

But it was not long before my deep silence and peace were disturbed by flights of fancy: yesterday's dinner, tomorrow's appointments, or a hurt of long ago. My mind asked how all this confusion could be called prayer. Why was my concentration and peace of mind so disturbed when all I wanted to do was to be with the Lord? How could I regain my tranquility? As I continued with my prayer, I found all these questions a natural reaction to my prayer experience, and their answers were much simpler than than they seemed at first glance.

As our body and mind begin to quiet down, the defenses and masks we have contrived in order to keep ourselves and others at a distance, begin to crumble. The true self, hidden deep within us, begins to surface, and the hurts we have buried within our unconscious mind are free to manifest themselves because we have removed some of our defensive mechanisms. Deep silence allows divine love to penetrate those long forgotten and painful areas in our lives that have been locked away due to fear and guilt. Love invites us to acknowledge these hurts and fears and then to let them go. Through the power of God's love we are now able to forgive ourselves and in turn reach out to forgive others.

The discipline to remain in quiet and peace comes with time, patience and faith in a loving God. Distractions do not make a bad prayer. They may temporarily remove us from our quiet place, but this does not negate the goodness of our original intention to be with God. God is pleased with our desire to be with Him, and it is this desire we must look to in times of discouragement.

Before beginning to pray, it is helpful to become as comfortable as possible without risking falling asleep. A firm chair is helpful since it allows us to sit upright and to breathe properly. But any position one finds comfortable with do. In this position the mind and body begin to slow down and relax, and breathing becomes peaceful and rhythmic. Listening to oneself inhale fresh air and exhale stale air helps focus attention away from distractions by drawing attention inward, thus allowing the Spirit freedom to begin healing.

Another practice I still find useful is the choice of a meaningful word or phrase, such as the Name of Jesus or "My Lord and my God." I gently repeat this word or phrase each time I become consciously aware that my mind

is wandering. Repeating the word or phrase helps bring me back to the awareness that I am in God's presence without disturbing my interior silence. Each time I return to this sacred word, I commit myself again to God, and thus renew the desire to be with Him as He leads me to Himself in love.

Distractions disturb our desire to be with God only if we *choose* to allow them to do so. When we become aware that we are daydreaming, remembering the past, letting our imagination wander, allowing stress to overwhelm us – or even those times when we are filled with the joy and happiness of thinking about God – we *must* gently bring ourselves back to our prayer through the repeated use of the sacred word. When we have finished praying, then we may pick up the threads of our thoughts and do with them what we feel we must. But during prayer times we must continually return to our center and remain in His quiet presence.

Distractions will come and go throughout the contemplative prayer experience. They are neither good nor bad; they just are, and must be let go. We should not enter into dialogue with any thoughts or ideas that may surface to the conscious mind during prayer time. There is plenty of time later for this.

We belong to God, and in choosing to spend time with Him on a regular basis, we are responding to his invitation to share the Divine Life. We are learning to love the Lord our God with our whole heart, our whole soul, our whole mind, and our whole body. In doing so God will live in us and His love will be complete in us.

*Adele M. Millette*

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Praying is good because it is a form of hard and clear thinking, a way of seeing values in their honest, proper perspective. It is a way of giving a large measure of heart and mind to our thoughts; a way of ruling out the extraneous, of refining crude self-interest, of purifying our hearts' desire. This in itself is enough to make prayer worth while. When we really know what counts with us as a supreme value, we have taken a first big step in realizing it.

*Dr. Nathan A. Perilman*

## TO A GOOD SERVANT OF THE SISTERHOOD

*(on her retirement)*

You did not choose me; I chose you.
Out of the teeming world I drew you
when a child – and put my hand on your heart.
Come, follow me and I will show you
the substance of things unseen-undreamed,
and the treasure that will never rust.
I will ask something too,
the hearth, the home to call your own,
the husband's arms, the babies at the breast,
and all the rest the world holds dear
But I will make you my friend and a friend
of all my friends – I will give you myself!
Now the race is almost run,
shadows fall behind because your face is
towards the sun.
You did not choose me; I chose you,
Come follow me – you belong to me.

*George Albert*

# The Bomb as Buddha

"The atomic bomb is the real Buddha of the west, a perfect detached soverign apparatus. Unmoving, it rests in its silo, purest actuality and purest potentiality. It is the embodiment of cosmic energics and the human share in these, the highest accomplishment of the human race, and its destroyer; the triumph of technical rationality, and its dissolution into paranoia. Its repose and its irony are endless. It is the same to the bomb how it fulfills its mission, whether in silent waiting or as a cloud of fire. For it, the change of conditioned states does not count.

As with a Buddha, all there is to say is said by its mere existence. It is not a big more evil than reality, and not a hair more destructive than we are. It is already completely incarnate, while we in comparison are still divided. In the face of such an instrument, great listening is called for. Rather than strategic considerations, the bomb requires from us neither struggle nor resignation, but experience of ourselves. We are it."

*Peter Slutterton*

# Regarding Peace

Contrary to what has been thought in recent centuries in the West, the spiritual or interior life is not an exclusively private affair. (In reality, the deepest and most authentic Western traditions are at one with those of the East on this point.) The spiritual life of one person is simply the life of all manifesting itself in him. While it is very necessary to emphasize the truth that as the person deepens his own thought in silence he enters into a deeper understanding of and communion with the spirit of his entire people (or of his Church), it is also important to remember that as he becomes engaged in the crucial struggles of his people, in seeking justice and truth together with his brother, he tends to liberate the truth in himself by seeking true liberty for all. Thus Plato taught that "to philosophize and concern oneself with politics is one and the same thing, and to wrestle with the sophist means at the same time to defend the city against tyranny."

*Thomas Merton*

"O that we who declare against all wars and acknowledge our trust to be in God only, may . . . examine our foundation and motives in holding great estates. May we look upon our treasures and the furniture of our houses, and the garments in which we array ourselves, and try whether the seeds of war have any nourishment in these our possessions . . . "

*John Woolman*

Daily I run into persons who have been wounded and still carry the burden of their hate – anger – so strongly, that it interferes with their daily living. When I run up against this – and there is time – I usually try to tap that inner source of PEACE . . . the quiet still PRESENCE and breath it out on the person . . . slowly – steadily – and it is amazing the effect that this has. Somehow the PEACE flows over into the other and O what shall I say? the cosmic vibrations are somehow restored. The eyes – face, relax – and even the breathing takes on a slower pace. For those who have studied cosmic vibrations this is nothing new – but for many it is a real source of new life and strength. In order for those who feel they are part of this PEACE MOVEMENT – there is a real urgency in their lives to spend time in real quiet. . .

*Sister Venita Baham OSC*

## PRAYER GIVES YOU SOMETHING TO DO

Prayer is to many, time for wishing for plenty,
A listing of wants and of needs.
But, prayer is much more than a trip to the store,
It's a time to prepare for good deeds.

Prayer is requesting that God send a blessing
To someone who's hungry and cold.
But, prayer doesn't end then, it only begins when
You share of the wealth that you hold.

Prayer can be yearning for spiritual learning,
God's Word you must read and apply.
But faith won't be strengthened, or patience be lengthened
Until you're determined to try.

Prayer can be pleading for God's help in leading
Your child in the path that is right.
With the example you set, NOT the lectures they get,
You can lead them to spiritual heights.

We should solicit in each little visit
God's help for a loved one who's lost.
Prayer said in one's stead, who is spiritually dead,
Can come true if you show them the cross.

A prayer can be uttered in a Church or a gutter,
But God listens to more than you say.
Prayer just doesn't end with a hearty "Amen",
It begins when you learn to obey.

Prayer is committing yourself to God's bidding
So to your committment be true.
Because, prayer doesn't give you just something to say;
PRAYER GIVES YOU SOMETHING TO DO!

*Trudy Keiter*

# A Parable Against Persecution

*Benjamin Franklin*

Shortly after expressing his critique of those who undermined religious faith, Franklin had written what became a famous plea for religious toleration, a principle to which he gave lifelong and wholehearted support. He wrote, imitating the style and cadence of the King James Bible, a "new chapter" of the Book of Genesis telling "A Parable Against Persecution":

1. And it came to pass after these Things, that Abraham sat in the Door of his Tent, about the going down of the Sun.

2. And behold a Man, bowed with Age, came from the Way of the Wilderness, leaning on a Staff.

3. And Abraham arose and met him, and said unto him, Turn in, I pray thee, and wash thy Feet, and tarry all Night, and thou shalt arise early on the Morrow, and go on thy Way.

4. And the Man said, Nay, for I will abide under this Tree.

5. But Abraham pressed him greatly; so he turned, and they went into the Tent; and Abraham baked unleavend Bread, and they did eat.

6. And when Abraham saw that the Man blessed not God, he said unto him, Wherefore dost thou not worship the most high God, Creator of Heaven and Earth?

7. And the Man answered and said, I do not worship the God thou speakest of; neither do I call upon his Name; for I have made to myself a God, which abideth alway in mine House, and provideth me with all Things.

8. And Abraham's Zeal was kindled against the Man; and he arose, and fell upon him, and drove him forth with Blows into the Wilderness.

9. And at Midnight God called unto Abraham, saying, Abraham, where is the Stranger?

10. And Abraham answered and said, Lord, he would not worship thee neither would he call upon thy Name; therefore have I driven him out from before my Face into the Wilderness.

11. And God said, Have I born with him these hundred ninety and eight Years, and nourished him, and clothed him, notwithstanding his Rebellion against me, and couldst not thou, that art thyself a Sinner, bear with him one Night?

12. And Abraham said, Let not the Anger of my Lord wax hot against his Servant. Lo, I have sinned; forgive me, I pray Thee.

13. And Abraham arose and went forth into the Wilderness, and sought diligently for the Man, and found him, and returned with him to his Tent; and when he had entreated him kindly, he sent him away on the Morrow with Gifts.

14. And God spake again unto Abraham, saying, For this thy Sin shall thy Seed be afflicted four Hundred Years in a strange Land:

15. But for thy Repentance will I deliver them; and they shall come forth with Power, and with Gladness of Heart, and with much Substance.

# Strange Behavior

In China there was a government official who later became a Zen Master, during the Tung dynasty. His name was Chi Su. He was in charge of handling all the money that came into the Emperor's treasury. He was very smart, and everyone liked and trusted him. People valued his opinion. Then one day he took a huge amount of money out of the treasury and just gave it away to a lot of people. It was a great crime.

The other men in his department said, "We like Chi Su and trust him, but this is crazy! As honest men, what can we do?" So they told the Emperor what Chi Su had done. The Emperor said, "There must be some ulterior motive for this action. But it's our law that there are certain ways of appropriating money. This was a big mistake on his part. Take him to court."

Chi Su was tried and sentenced to execution. Nobody wanted to do it; but they had decided on their law, and he had broken it. The day of the execution came. The Emperor called the executioner, a great swordsman, a man who could cut off your head so cleanly and quickly that there was no suffering. The Emperor said to him, "When you raise your sword and are ready to cut off his head, first look at his face. If his face shows any signs of regret or remorse or puzzlement, cut off his head quickly. If not, don't cut."

On the appointed day, Chi Su put his head on the block. The swordsman lifted his sword, ready to cut off his head. He looked down and saw Chi Su smiling. Smiling! Chi Su, seeing the bewilderment on the swordsman's face, looked up at him and said, "I dedicate this next birth to all sentient beings"

So of course he didn't have his head cut off. A messenger ran and told the Emperor, who was very proud of Chi Su. He knew there had been some ulterior motive for Chi Su's action. So he called for Chi Su and said, "I am very happy. But we in the government want to understand why you gave all that money away."

Chi Su said, "For a long time now I've been thinking about quiting my government post, giving alms to the people, and only practicing Buddism. So I decided that in my next life, if you killed me now, I would be reborn as a Zen student and only practice Buddhism."

At that time it was very difficult to get out of a government post, especially a high-ranking one. You couldn't just quit your job. It had to be approved by the Emperor, and Chi Su didn't think that would happen. He did this action without any concern about whether he would get a reprieve or not.

The Emperior said, "I will give you a new name, Yen Shu, which means prolonged life.' Yen Shu became a Zen student, and a short time later, maybe five years, became a Zen Master.

*Mu Deung Su Nim is a master Dharma teacher and Abbot of Tahl Mah Sah Zen Center in Los Angeles he told the following story during an interview at Providence Zen Center in Providence, RI on Oct. 1, 1983. (This article is reprinted with permission from Primary Point the quarterly publication of the Providence Zen Center)*

# Prayer to a Blind God ?

More often than not, when we pray, we ask. We ask for things and deeds, for help, healing, direction or strength.

And yet, if Prayer is to be a powerful tool to implement a divine purpose we either sense or know exists, prayer can or must be, more than just asking. Through Prayer we help to bring the kingdom of God into earthly manifestation, or phrased another way, we participate in making "Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven".

What does this mean about the uses of prayer?

Paul informs us that we exist, in the body of "the One in whom we live and move and have our being". He implies that we are as one cell within the body of One Life. Part of us, is part of that divinity, omniscient and wise, strong and able. By focusing on that True Self, we can learn to use prayer as a communication between the higher and the lower, the divine and the worldly, the inner and the outer, the outer self or personality and the inner self or soul. Prayer then, is no longer just a statement of supplication, it is not just an act of asking, but an act of recognition – the recognition of our divine potential and of our abilities to better use it for the betterment of mankind.

I wonder if, when we continually place ourselves before God as supplicants, we are not making an assumption that He does not care or does not see our suffering. Do we assume that He does not know what has to be done?

Would we not then pray to a blind God? Would we not impune to Him a powerlessness to see and know? When we pray asking for that which He knows, do we not then pray to One who is not awake to the needs within His body of manifestation? Wouldn't such a thought in itself negate the use and power of prayer? Why bother to pray to a blind god?

He who sees and knows is neither blind nor asleep. We do live and move and have our being within His Great Body. Something within us links us to His Will, and His Consciousness – simply because we are as one cell within Him, we cannot help but have such links, whether or not we recognize or properly utilize them.

When prayer is used in this context, it is a practical tool to remove the veils which obscure these links. Our link to the Divine can be as a Tibetan teacher put it, "reached, realized and expressed." We can learn, however slowly, to make our wills one with His. Prayer then, is not just an act of saying "give me," "do for me," but our channel of ascent and acquiescence, of recognition and participation, which enables us to further understand and to practice the Biblical saying that "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he".

Used as communication between the earthly and the divine, prayer is also our tool to listen to the Master's Voice, to remove the barriers within us that cloud our everyday self from contacting and expressing the divinity within us. We listen to the Voice of Silence, and in listening, become able to reflect, to ponder on the relationship of the lower as a part of the higher and to see more clearly the divine in all things. As we listen, we can realize that we are

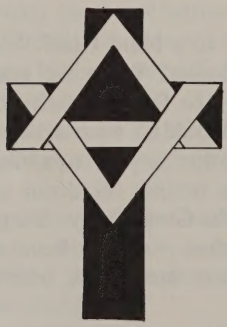
strong and able, we can do, we can work, and we need not ask for those things which we can provide for ourselves. We learn to deepen our expression of divinity and as we do so, we cannot help but better recognize that divinity in others. We can then be instruments to stimulate and nurture like qualities in others: we can be conscious channels for the love of God.

It goes without saying that working to be such channels implies a deep spiritual responsibility on our part. Yet, as we practice prayer, mindful of our divine responsibility, we realize that it invokes higher energies, as well evoking within us the necessary livingness to really participate in making "thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven".

If we wish to try to meet this responsibly, perhaps the following four points may be of use in our practice of prayer. We can:

1. reflect on our attitudes towards prayer
2. examine our motives for each particular prayer
3. endeavor to see prayer as an exercise of our own divinity
4. Anchor our understanding by beginning each prayer with a thought such as "may the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart always be acceptable in thy sight. . ."
5. And by ending our prayers with "let thy will be done, not mine".

*Danielle Levy*



"It is sad to reflect that men at different times and in different places have appropriated to themselves the exclusive privilege of divine guidance and have believed that their own religion was the only right religion and their religious leader the one and only true Prophet or bearer of God's Message. The Quran has over and over again stressed the universality of divine guidance and grace and proclaimed that there have been countless Messengers of God in various places and at different times and that it is not right to discriminate between them. "For every people (there has been) a guide". (XIII: 7) "For every people (was sent) a Messenger." (X:)

*Ashfaque Hussain in "The Quintessence of Islam"*

# Resources

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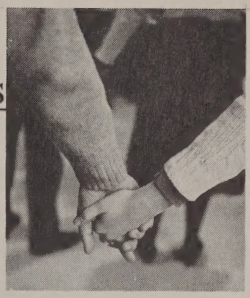

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